

Mr. Chairman, members of the Education and Cultural Resources Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. My name is Dave Carlson and I am a resident of Whitefish Mt, and the Principal of Whitefish High, home of the Bulldogs.

Whitefish High School has an enrollment of 480 students, 9-12 who reside within 230 square miles. We have 42 highly qualified certified teachers who share a passion for learning and students. The district has four buildings used to educate our students, our high school, an Independent High School, (Alternative Learning) Central Middle School and Muldown Elementary. Together, we educate over 1,603 students.

Our vision of Whitefish High School is High Expectations, High Achievement for All.

Our Mission is to equip students to be life-long learners; academically and socially well-rounded citizens; independent, critical thinkers; and active participants in a global community and changing workforce.

To model and incorporate our vision and mission into our curriculum we have developed several new program that I would like to share with you today.

The ASPIRE program (**A**chieving **S**uccess through the **P**ursuit of Integrity **R**esponsibility & **E**xcellence) is one of our new programs.

This comprehensive program provides each ninth grade student with a nurturing but strongly academic environment designed to provide a successful transition from middle to high school. This program is an adaptation of highly successful freshman 'learning communities' or 'academies' that has been tailored to fit our small community and take advantage of the strengths of Whitefish High School." The goal of the program is to create a safe and orderly learning environment that addresses the specific social, emotional and academic needs of ninth grade students.

Program Benefits

Incoming freshmen enjoy a number of benefits from ASPIRE including:

- Small, safe and more personal learning environment.
- Leadership and individual counseling from an interdisciplinary faculty team.
- Focus on consistent and productive study skills.
- Development of learning plans for each student that will serve as the basis for their academic strategy and goals for their entire high school career.
- Higher expectations for personal achievement within a challenging curriculum.
- Project based and collaborative learning integrated into the core curriculum.
- Enhanced communication with parents of continuous student evaluation.
- Incorporation of 21st Century Literacy skills into a strong curriculum of core subjects designed to teach the skills on which self-reliance, personal leadership and successful relationships are based.

Small Scale Learning Environments

Key to the success of the program is the formation of two "teams" of students that divide the group of approximately 130 freshmen into two more personal groups of 65. Each team has its own faculty leaders who continuously encourage students, evaluate their performance to identify students at-risk personally, academically or socially, as well as looking at enrichment programs for students who excel. The teams engage in friendly competition as they work on interdisciplinary projects throughout the school year.

Interdisciplinary Teaching & Continuous Evaluation

The leadership of ASPIRE is a team of faculty, administration and counselors working in concert to provide counseling and encouragement based on the individual needs of students. The Freshman Academy team evaluates student test data and historic performance reports to design learning programs before each school year begins. The teams meet daily to evaluate student performance on a real-time basis and also use standardized test results and semester tests to evaluate performance more

formally. This process allows ample opportunity to adjust curriculum and learning plans during the course of the year. A major benefit of this process is enhanced communication to parents who will receive more regular and detailed feedback about their child's progress.

Core Curriculum Integrated with 21st Century Literacy

The strength of the ASPIRE curriculum is its collaborative delivery of high quality core curriculum: 21st Century Literacy, English, Earth Science, Physical Education and Health. The element that differentiates ASPIRE is its integration of "21st Century Literacy" into the curriculum. This innovative coursework is woven into the core curriculum throughout the year and includes:

- Learning Skills,
- Financial Literacy,
- Career Exploration,
- Human Relations, and
- Media Literacy.

The program is also supported by specialized faculty who work individually with students who need additional support with core skills required for success in the program.

After one semester of the ASPIRE program we are already seeing improved results among our freshman. Less truancy, improved attendance; major discipline issues have been reduced; grades are up and failures down. A year ago we had 32 F's or failures issued to our 9th grade students. Today, at the end of our semester 2 weeks ago we have only 12 failures. Through our personal and individualized learning, differentiation of instruction and a system of interventions for each student we are making social and academics strides for our students.

As many of us know, the suicide rate among the citizens of Montana are some of the highest in the nation. Last year, we lost one of our students to suicide and dealt with several other attempts. As a district and community, Whitefish came together and incorporated the nationally known Student Assistance Program.

The Whitefish School District recognized that the primary responsibility of school is to provide opportunities for students to reach their full potential academically, and to prepare them to become competent members of our society. The educational process must provide students with skills to make informed decisions about significant life issues that impact their academic, mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

We recognize that numerous issues and struggles such as; bullying, parental divorce, grief and loss, drug and alcohol abuse, and disabilities have the potential to interfere with a student's opportunity for success within our school system, and their future. The primary task for helping students lies within the home, though schools share in the responsibility with families to support individual student learning and development.

The Whitefish School District has adopted the Student Assistance Program as a comprehensive, primary prevention and early intervention support for our student body K-12. The program includes a systematic effort to educate, identify, assess, refer and support students who are faced with issues and behaviors that are interfering with their educational and life development.

Components of the program include:

- Support Groups K-12
- Groups for students challenged with drug and alcohol abuse as part of the district Chemical Use and Possession Policy
- Comprehensive training for all staff
- Community networking
- Education and support of families
- Curriculum Infusion
- Ongoing evaluation of district/ community need

During the last semester we ran seven student groups for a period of eight weeks. Groups included Sharing, Grief, Concerned students and Insight which covered alcohol, drug or families in crisis. Facilitators included trained teachers who received 3 days of training last August. Included in your packet are the results of our most recent student survey. As you can see we made a huge difference in many of our student's lives and the program had a very positive effect.

We are proud of our students academic successes. According to Jan Clinard, MT Board of Regents, Our students higher education remediation rates in composition based on the Montana University System Writing Assessment are among the lowest in the state, Fall 2005: 6.7%, Fall 2006: 4.8%, Fall 2007:2.6%, Fall 2008: 6.9& Fall 2009: 0%. The state rate was 10.7% in the fall of 2009. Our students leave Whitefish college ready.

These statistics are no fluke; they are supported by ACT scores of a composite of 25.5 versus 22 for the state of MT and 21 nationally. In addition, Whitefish was one of the few High Schools in the state that met the benchmarks under No Child Left Behind and made AYP in Math and Reading. Currently, we have 2 finalists for the coveted National Merit Program and we also have 10 graduates attending military academies. Last spring, \$3.5 million dollars in scholarships were awarded to our seniors. That amounts to \$21,985.00 per senior or \$51,666.00 for those that apply. Our students are driven and motivated by a dedicated staff of teachers, staff, parents and a community which has a tradition of history and success.

With a graduation rate of 97%, 63% of our seniors plan to attend college and 23% plan to attend a 2 year/vocational school while 3 % are pursuing the military.

I could go on about our great kids but with a tip of the hat to Garrison Keillor, I will say so long from Whitefish, where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.

Like everyone in this chair, I have spent a good deal of time telling you about all the great things that are going on in our schools. After all, our student's successes keep us and politicians motivated to keep striving for greatness. However, we currently find ourselves in a situation where

schools are struggling to maintain, caught between the current political issues and economic realities of the day.

Whitefish has its roots at the turn of the century with the introduction of James J. Hills Great Northern Railway. Today, four generations of students walk the halls of our building, we are a school and community stepped deep in tradition. However, our infrastructure is aging quickly; built in the late 40's and early 50's it has become a relic like so many cold war facilities. I have named each wing after the President who was in office at the time of its construction. We begin the day in the Truman wing, pass through the Eisenhower and Kennedy wing to lunch and then off to PE in the Ford gym and finally the Carter Science wing. I am sure there is a Ronald Reagan remodel somewhere and we now host the Obama guidance office remodel. Education is so much more than bricks and mortar and we are proof that there is not a relationship between academic success and new pretty buildings. But we are approaching a point of critical proportions. The need to invest in our building is key to the future of education in Whitefish. The purpose of the Quality Schools Grant Program is to provide infrastructure grants, planning grants and emergency grants to public schools in MT. HB 15 contains the list of projects recommended for the Quality Schools Grant Program. This bill is currently under scrutiny and faces several hurdles and cuts before it is brought to a vote.

Whitefish High School has applied for and is in consideration for a Quality Grant to redevelop and modernize our much needed gym facility. I would encourage you to support our efforts to upgrade and modernize without having to tear down and build new. In this case, all parties are being fiscally responsible and in no way are we throwing good money after bad.

Thanks again for the opportunity to speak with you today and give you some insight from the trenches. All of us in Whitefish appreciate your consideration and support for HB 15. If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at 406-471-6666.

Respectfully,

Dave Carlson
Principal
Whitefish High School.

Student Survey Grades 7-12

Fall 2010

What effect has the student support group had upon:

1. Your ability to find new positive ways to deal with problems
2. Your feelings of self- worth.....
3. Your ability to cope in stressful situations.....
4. Your ability to communicate and express your feelings in a positive way with others.....
5. Your ability to make or explore supportive friendships.....
6. Your ability to help friends who need assistance.....
7. Your relationships with other students.....
8. Your ability to help family members.....
9. Your relationship with members of your family.....
10. Your mental health.....
11. Your physical health.....
12. Your school attendance.....
13. Your overall school work.....
14. Your general attitude toward school.....

A Positive effect	No Effect	Not in group long enough to know
33	3	3
32	7	
23	15	1
35	2	2
31	6	2
31	7	1
28	10	1
16	22	1
16	20	3
30	8	1
16	19	4
14	25	2
15	22	2
20	18	1

15. Rate how successful you feel the support group was (circle one)

Low High
1 2 3 4 5
2 24 13

16. Have you ever considered dropping out of school? Yes 11 No 25
17. If you have considered dropping out of school, have the group sessions helped you stay in school? Yes 7 No 14
18. Have you ever used tobacco, alcohol or other drugs? Yes 12 No 19
19. If you answered yes to the having used tobacco, alcohol or other drugs,

What effect has the support group has upon your use of alcohol or other drugs?

- 6 Has decreased my use
5 Have stopped using
5 No effect upon my use, but am more aware of the problems
5 No effect upon my use

20. How has the support group helped you?

- It has helped me to be able to talk to my family more, and to talk with my friends better and teachers.
- Interact with others and how to listen. How to say whatever and not worry about being judged.
- It made me feel better about my personal self.
- A place where you can express yourself without being judged.
- I like having someone listen who won't judge me or won't feel offended by what I say.
- Can deal with my problems in a positive attitude.
- The group allowed me to share some of the challenges I face personally which was not something I was able to do before. Having people purely listen to me was very valuable as well. Both sharing and listening while in group has given me an insight into myself and into my relationships with others. With this insight I have been able to reassess my interactions with others and work toward changing them for the better.
- It has taught me that I am not alone with my problems and that there are others like me and people who can and want to help.
- Support group has helped me become more aware of my actions and shown me that it doesn't have to be like this, (hard).
- I.D.K
- It has helped me be able to talk to others a lot easier with my feelings.
- It made me feel more open to be more myself, honestly I've stopped drinking as much which to me is a very grand thing in my life. I'm less stressed and I have more positive ways toward myself, friends, family, and life. I know everyone has problems in life, however I never realized how similar we can all be with our issues. And in a way I didn't feel like I was the only one being neglected and compared to, such as family/ sibling comparison. I've been less stressed and carefree of what others think, though I became friendly than before and work harder to concentrate in school.
- It's a place where I can blow off steam and escape the demands of high school life.
- Not really helpful for me but for others that can use my help. Too many years of therapy I suppose.
- It has helped me with learning to cope better with loss and healthy ways to grieve, it showed me I am not alone and there are people you can go to for help, or even to just talk to. I feel much better as a person knowing I have helped people and been helped.
- It's helped me come to terms with my friend's suicide, and a few of my other problems I've gone through.
- It has helped me by not keeping everything to myself, lets me get some stuff off my chest, and lets me help others.
- If I'm feeling stressed it helps me cope with my feelings and work out my problems.
- I've opened up more.
- It has helped me realize that "I'm not alone" and "others have some of the same problems as you".
- The support group has helped me because it has given me a safe place to share my thoughts and feelings where I know no one will judge me and what I say will not go out of the room.

- A little support that hasn't been there and brought good to my life.
- Realized everyone has problems and mine really aren't that big a lot of my prejudice thoughts, met a lot of cool people.
- Makes me realize it's not just you going through a hard time, there's other people that understand and can support you.
- The group has shown me that I'm not alone in what happens and that people are there to help me.
- Can face problems easier.
- It showed me the people are going through the same thing.
- It has allowed me to get a few things off my chest but not all.
- It has helped my communication with my parents. It has also helped with my emotional health when it comes to my relationships with others and working through certain issues.
- It's helped me realize that I can forgive myself and others. I don't have to blame myself for a lot of things anymore and I can trust.
- Well, group has really made me see how other people have problems too. I used to feel like I was the only one with problems I didn't know how to fix. But this made me open my eyes and realize other people do have challenges. I don't feel as alone.
- The group has showed me to respect and show others with the same respect and love one another.
- It has helped me come out of my comfort zone (for the better) and open up to others my thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It provides me a healthy way to release my stress and frustration. And teaches me that you cannot judge those you do not know. And everybody has problems and stories, so there is a level of comfort knowing you are not alone.
- Showed me that sitting and listening to someone on how they feel instead of yelling back and arguing with them helps get you moving forward in the situation.
- I'm more aware of problems and issues that could be dealt with in better and more positive ways.
- I got to open up to my peers and get confidence, with people around my age, something that I've always struggled with was talking with others about my own problems at my own age.
- It has been a great place to simply talk. Whether about my feelings or usage it has been the best part of my week.
- The group has brought security and helpfulness to me.
- Helped me have more respect for people that are in group at this school. It made me feel like I wasn't alone and that people cared. Knowing and seeing people listen to me helped a lot also.

According to Jan Clinard – Board of Regents – WHS remediation rates in composition based on the Montana University System Writing Assessment are among the lowest rates in the state. Fall 2005: 6.7%
 Fall 2006: 4.8 %, Fall 2007: 2.6% Fall 2008: 6.9% Fall: 0%. State rate was 10.7% in fall 2009

2009

Class of 2010

<u>SAT (mean)</u>	<u>Critical Read</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Writing</u>
WHS	536	544	522
Montana	538	538	517
National	501	516	492

<u>ACT (mean)</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Composite</u>
WHS	25.2	26.2	25.8	24.3	25.5
Montana	21.3	21.7	22.7	21.9	22
National	20.5	21	21.3	20.9	21

ACT – Percent of Students Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks

	<u>English</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>All Four</u>
WHS	92	77	92	65	65
Montana	74	51	62	34	28

ACT – Level of Preparation (Core or More students taking four or more year of English & 3 or more years of math, social studies and natural science)

<u>English</u>		<u>Math</u>		<u>Reading</u>		<u>Science</u>		<u>Composite</u>	
Core	Less	Core	Less	Core	Less	Core	Less	Core	Less
25.9	22.2	26.8	23.4	26	25	25	21.6	26	23.2

GPA – class of 2011 average is 2.780, 120 students

Running Start – average 15 - 25 students a semester, dual credit may be given or college credit only depending on the license held by instructor. Elective credit only.

Range of Class Offerings - 6 years of math (Alg I, Geometry, Alg II, Statistics, Advanced Math, AP Calculus)

- Lower level math: Transitional Math, Alg IA, Alg IB
- 7 years of Science (Environmental Sci, Earth Sci, Biology, Chemistry, Advanced Chemistry, Physics, AP Biology)
- 3 years each Spanish and French
- 3 years Art
- 3 years Social Sciences plus 4 semester classes
- Advanced Placement Classes –four American Government, Biology, Calculus, English

Advanced Placement Classes (4)

*Class of 2009 – 43 % of seniors enrolled in AP classes, 26% took 2 or more AP classes

- 107 students took the AP Exam

*Score of 5 (perfect) – 16	15% of total
*Score of 4 -38	36%
*Score of 3 -25	23%
*Score of 2 -21	20%
*Score of 1 - 7	7%

*Class of 2010 – 48% of seniors enrolled in AP classes, 50.7% took 2 or more AP classes

Post High School Intentions

*4 year college	60.1 % (Class of 2006)
	61% (Class of 2007)
	63% (Class of 2008)
	63% (Class of 2009)
*2 year college	17.4% (Class of 2006)
	19.2% (Class of 2007)
	23% (Class of 2008)
	25% (Class of 2009)
*College of Tech	5.1% (Class of 2006)
	5% (Class of 2007)
	6.3% (Class of 2008)
	6% (Class of 2009)
*Military	3.6% (Class of 2006)
	3.3% (Class of 2007)
	3.3% (Class of 2008)
	3% (Class of 2009)

Advanced Placement Classes (AP) :

*four offered in American Government, Biology, Calculus, English Literature and Composition

*class of 2011 - 43% of seniors enrolled in AP classes

*class of 2011 – 26% are taking 2 or more AP classes

College Bound:

*class of 2010 - 63% planned to attend 4 year school

- 23 % planned to attend 2 year/vocational school

Scholarship Money Awarded:

*class of 2009 - 3.1million, \$21,985 per senior, \$51,666 per senior applying for scholarships

* last five years \$11,289,340.00

*class of 2010 - \$4,826,399, \$37,126 per senior, \$96,527 per senior applying for scholarships

Military Academies -

*current: 2 – Air Force Cadets , 1 – West Point Cadet, 2 - Merchant Marine Cadets

*Class of 2011 Nominations– 1-Air Force Academy, 1 Naval Academy
1 Merchant Marines Academy

National Merit Scholarship Program – 4 Finalists class of 2009, One Scholar
2 Finalists class of 2010
2 Semifinalists class of 2011

Graduation Rate Average: 97%**Library:**

*6400 square foot facility

*13,000+ volumes

*3 computer labs – 75 brand new computers

*several subscriptions to various data bases

*two full time librarians

*fully automated

Specialized Study Hall – English and Math – staffed by Math or English instructor

Student/Teacher Ratio – 18/1

*Work (P/T or F/T)	36%	(Class of 2006)	Most reported would be attending some school in addition to working.
	34%	(Class of 2007)	
	33%	(Class of 2008)	
	30%	(Class of 2009)	

National Merit Program

*2009 - 4 semifinalists
 3 commended students
 1 Scholar

*2010 - 2 semifinalists
 2 commended students
 2 Finalists

Service Academies

2006 - 2 appointments – West Point
 2007 - 1 appointment - West Point
 2008 - 1 appointment - Air Force
 2009 - 5 appointments – 1 Naval Academy
 1 Air Force
 2 West Point
 1 Merchant Marines
 2010 - 1 appointment – Air Force

Scholarship Money Awarded

*Class of 2009 - \$3.5 million (\$21,985 per senior, \$51,666 per senior applying)

*Class of 2008 - \$2.9 million (\$18,021 per senior, \$46,507 per senior applying)

*last six years \$14.5 million dollars awarded to WHS senior

Colleges/Universities attended by WHS Graduates

Montana Schools:

Carroll College
Rocky Mountain College
Montana State University-Bozeman
Montana State University-Northern
Montana State University-Billings
University of Great Falls
Montana Tech of the University of Montana
University of Montana-Missoula
University of Montana Western Montana College

Service Academies:

US Naval Academy
US Coast Guard Academy
US Air Force Academy
US Military Academy-Westpoint
US Merchant Marine Academy

Other Schools:

University of Northern Colorado
University of Idaho
Northwest Nazarene College
Idaho State University
Concordia College
Colorado School of Mines
Washington State University
Stanford University
Pomona College
Boston University
University of Notre Dame
A & M University
University of Portland
Whitman College
Evangel University
Florida Southern College
Full Sail University
Oral Roberts University
University of California-Berkley
Lake Tahoe Community College
Spokane Falls Community College

Montana Community Schools:

Flathead Valley Community College
Dawson Community College
Miles City Community College

MT Colleges of Technology

Missoula COT
Helena COT
Butte COT
Great Falls COT
Billings COT

Gonzaga University
Eastern Washington University
Western Washington University
Westwood College of Technology
Tufts University
Willamette University
American University
Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo
Middlebury College
Bates College
University of New Hampshire
Seattle University
Point Loma Nazarene University
University of Pennsylvania
Albertson College of Idaho
University of Southern California
McGill University
Georgetown University
Wheaton College
Harvard
Tulane

Whitworth College
Pacific Lutheran University
North Dakota State College of Science
University of Puget Sound
University of San Diego
University of Redlands
North Idaho College
University of California San Diego
Art Institute of Seattle
Texas Christian University
Trinity
Scripps College
University of the Pacific
Colorado College
Northwestern University
University of Alaska-Anchorage
Colby College
Amherst
Emerson College
Gustavus Adolphus College
Fullerton College
Bethel University
University of California-Santa Barbara
University of California-Los Angeles
Colorado State University-Fort Collins
Mesa State College
University of Colorado-Boulder
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs
Cooper Union of the Advancement of Science & Art
George Fox University
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth
University of Hawaii-Hilo
Brown University
University of Virginia
University of Idaho
William College
BYU-Idaho
Purdue University
Pepperdine University
Westmont College
Seattle Pacific University
Duke University
CalTech
Reed College

University of Mary
Lewis & Clark State College
Dickenson College
George Washington University
Biola University
University of Santa Clara
California State University of Chico
V.B. C School of Art
Chapman University
University of Oregon
University of Vermont
Cornell college
Saint Mary's College
St. John's College
Emery-Riddle University
Arizona State University
Mesa Community College
Northern Arizona University
Claremont McKenna College
Minnesota State University-Moorhead
Loyola Marymount University
Occidental College
Cottey College
University of Las Vegas
Creighton University
Dartmouth College
Princeton University
Jamestown College
Yale University
Columbia University
Linfield College
University of Hawaii-Manoa
Boise State University
University of Wyoming
Michigan State University
Idaho State University
Brigham Young University
Pacific University
Saint Mary's college of California
New York University
John-Hopkins University
MIT
DigiPen Institute of Technology
Susquhanna University